

Washington, DC - Members of the Congressional TriCaucus - comprised of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus - along with the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which together make up nearly 120 Members of the House and Senate, today held a press conference to reiterate their call that any Health Care reform must include a public health plan option.

"Today, over 46 million Americans do not have health care coverage. More than 30% of Latinos are uninsured, even though we comprise only 15% of the nation's population," said **Congresswoman Nydia M. Velazquez (NY-12), Chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus**

. "Whether it's the graduate student who can't afford to pay for coverage or the homeless mother and her two children that are going from one relative's home to another, we must ensure that all Americans have access to coverage. A public plan option has the potential to promote competition, help bring down costs and increase coverage for all Americans."

"We cannot move forward without a strong public option," stated **Congressman Raul M. Grijalva (AZ-07), Co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus**

. "Health care costs are skyrocketing for everyone, and our health is worsening. It is time that we attain health care reform that prioritizes and alleviates the financial burden on families."

"The benefits of a public health plan are clear. A public health plan will guarantee coverage regardless of pre-existing condition. A public health plan will give patients a choice of doctors and hospitals. And a public health plan will build in incentives for private insurers to lower costs to compete," said **Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-09), Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus**

. "When it comes to the public plan, know that the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific Caucus and the Congressional Progressive Caucus speak with one voice."

"Our health care system must provide all of America's diverse populations with high quality care," said **Congressman Mike Honda (CA-15), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus**

. "Private providers and insurers have in large part failed to meet the language and cultural needs of racial and ethnic minorities. Children should never be forced

to translate for their family members in critical health care situations. This is particularly dire in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities because of our diverse language needs. A robust public option offers us the opportunity to get it right."

"This process of publicly issuing our own criteria isn't how progressives normally operate. Usually, we work behind the scenes to strengthen legislation. This time, however, is different. No one in this building wants health care reform as much as we do," said **Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (CA-06), Co-Chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus**. "Nonetheless, if reform legislation comes to the floor, and it does not include a real and robust public option that lives up to our criteria, then we will fight it with everything that we have."

By calling for a robust public option, the four Caucuses are saying that a public plan should:

- Be universal and include mental and dental health services.
- Utilize the existing infrastructure of successful public programs like Medicare in order to maintain transparency and consumer protections for administering processes including payment systems, claims and appeals.
- Receive at least the same consumer subsidies as private plans and pay competitive provider rates that ensure equal access to affordable, quality care.
- Reflect an overall commitment to the elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities.